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The Economic Writings of Sir William Petty, Together with the Observations upon the Bills of Mortality, more probably by Captain John Graunt. Edited by CHARLES HENRY HULL, Ph.D. Cambridge [Eng.] University Press, 1899. 2 vols. 8vo. pp. xci.+700.

LORD EDMUND FITZMAURICE, who had intended to make a collection of Petty's works, may rest content that, in yielding the task to Professor Hull, of Cornell University, the work has been done with an erudition, accuracy, intelligence, and thoroughness which leave nothing to be desired. Seldom have the man and the task been so perfectly fitted. The result has been an achievement for American scholarship of which the brotherhood of economists in this country may well be proud. It may serve as a model for others who contemplate such studies; although few men are likely to have the antecedent library training and the painstaking carefulness of Professor Hull in minute affairs of bibliographical detail. In this respect the volumes are unusually valuable to the scholar.

One need read no further than the admirable life of Petty to be satisfied as to the quality of the work. No cross-reference seems to have been possible which has escaped the vigilance of the editor. Nor has the strictly impartial attitude of the historian ever been wanting, so far as I have been able to discover. The life of the man, clearly enough, is the justification of the existence of this edition. Petty's individuality and character were extraordinarily interesting. Not only a professor of anatomy at Oxford, but a doctor of medicine, a professor of music at Gresham College, a designer of fast sailing boats ("when he had a fit of double bottom"), Evelyn could say of him, also: "There is no better Latin poet living when he gives himself that diversion." Not only was he a clever actor, but Pepys found him "the most rational man that ever he heard speak with a tongue." More than all this, Petty played a prominent rôle in the politics of Ireland and England, showed great administrative capacity, courage, independence, and diplomatic skill; a follower of Cromwell, he remained on good terms with the Crown after the Restoration. Of an original and creative mind, he was, of course, one of the charter members of the Royal Society, and a party to the mathematical and scientific discussions of the time. In his fertile inventive capacity, eagerly interested in the practical questions of the day, and always acting so that he might have

an influence on their solution, Sir William Petty reminds one very strongly of a modern economist, David A. Wells.

Intellectually, Petty's achievements afford a basis for legitimate admiration. He had no body of economic law to lean upon; consequently his observations have a freshness and dash which are refreshing. There was nothing stereotyped in his reasoning or in his methods. In Graunt's *Observations* one suspects the presence of Petty when speaking of the effect of rickets on mortality, advancing by irregular starts and jerks (p. 358):

"Now such back-startings seem to be universal in all things; for we do not only see in the progressive motion of the wheels of *Watches*, and in the rowing of *Boats*, that there is a little starting or jerking backwards between every step forwards, but also (if I am not much deceived) there appeared the like in the motion of the *Moon*, which in the long *Telescopes* at *Gresham Colledge* one may sensibly discern." One did not need the *ultra crepidam* note of the author referring to the shaky telescope to be reminded of the occasional lapses of the economist traveling in an untrodden country.

Likewise, the dryness of statistics, even at the hands of one of the first actuaries, have a compensating charm, when we are shown that the growth of London must stop of itself before 1800; or when Petty drives from their position the skeptics who claimed that the whole earth could not furnish matter enough for all those who must rise on the Resurrection Day (p. 467).

Petty's economic studies and his appeal to statistics are enough superior to the work of that day to give him an honorable place in the history of political economy. The appointment to the army in Ireland which bent his whole career gave rise to valuable studies, which demanded the careful treatment and the accessibility which our editor has given them. The easy access furnished to these materials is a lasting service for all who are to come after us. Nothing is omitted. A superlatively good index, the lives and studies of the introduction, the examination given to the documents, the texts themselves, the bibliography, and the extraordinary conscience put into the notes and references, altogether unite in making a wholly satisfactory and admirable piece of workmanship.

J. LAURENCE LAUGHLIN.